



# M E D I A   R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## **Tennessee Submits ESEA Flexibility Application**

NASHVILLE — The U.S. Department of Education today begins its review of Tennessee's waiver from certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as No Child Left Behind.

The waiver is an effort to keep schools and districts focused on the ambitious yet achievable goals of Tennessee's winning Race to the Top program, and much of the accountability framework is similar to the department's initial letter requesting a waiver, submitted on July 29. Tennessee's complete application and supporting documents can be found at [http://tn.gov/education/doc/ESEA\\_Flexibility\\_Request.pdf](http://tn.gov/education/doc/ESEA_Flexibility_Request.pdf).

In exchange for the unrealistic Adequate Yearly Progress goals Tennessee is held to under NCLB, the state is proposing to raise overall achievement by 3 to 5 percent every year for the next eight years, and cut the achievement gap in half during that same time.

"Drastically reducing the achievement gap and raising overall proficiency in Tennessee will put the state on a positive trajectory," said Education Commissioner Kevin Huffman. "If approved, our waiver would help align our First to the Top plan with our state accountability system by giving educators goals they feel they could actually help their students reach."

To track schools' progress, the U.S. Department of Education required that Tennessee identify three groups:

- Reward schools: Ten percent of schools throughout the state with the highest achievement or overall growth.
- Focus schools: Ten percent of Tennessee's schools with the largest achievement gaps.
- Priority schools: The bottom five percent of the state's schools in terms of academic performance.

As described in the waiver, each group will receive additional focused support and resources.

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